

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Alexander Melville Bell and Eliza Symonds Bell, February 12, 1876, with transcript

5 Exeter Place, Boston. Feb. 12th, 1876. Dear Papa & Mama,

What a merciless tyrant Time is! How it flies — and flies all the faster when one is busy.

I rush from one thing to another and before I know it the day has gone! University — V.S. — Telegraphy — Mabel — visiting — &c., &c. — usurp every moment of my time — and I cannot manage all that I lay myself out to do. It is so refreshing to get an occasional glimpse of home through the ever-changing panorama passing before me here. But it seems so strange too — to think of you all going on just as usual in quiet out-of-the-way Canada — while everything changes Kaleidoscope-fashion here. However things seem to be changing with you too — at least the outside appearance of things — if Mr. Chane has been doing his duty. New paint is about the worst companion possible to have in a house and I trust you have not been suffering from it. I should like to have a look at the new Baywindow in the Study. I am sure it must be a great improvement — but poor Papa! Where is his sofa and headlamp to be put! If you are going to have the house “fixed” up so soon — I shall have to see if I can't manage to bring May up to see it soon! I am of course at Cambridge a good deal in the evenings — and I think 2 that May & I are both very happy — almost too happy I am sometimes afraid — for great happiness cannot last long.

Mabel showed me a very lovely pin-cushion she has been making “for one of her cousins who is going to be married”. It is covered with blue satin ribbon & lace intertwined so as to make a chess-board pattern — and looks very beautiful. As I did not know of any cousin of

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hers who was going to be married I asked what her name was. She answered that it had been made for her cousin "Lily Bell"!

Mr. Hubbard is in Washington — Miss Gertrude Hubbard in New York — & Mrs. Hubbard & the rest of the family in Cambridge. Mrs. Sanders came in to Boston a few days ago to see me with George. She is well — but gave me some very sad information about Georgie. Mrs. Sanders had noticed a curious lump on George's side for some time — & at last thought of having him examined by a doctor who decided that poor little George must have had some strain which had occasioned a rupture — and it is to be feared he will have to wear bandages and a truss all his life. It seems that Mr. & Mrs. Sanders (Junior) had noticed the lump at least a year and a half ago — but had not informed Mrs. Sanders about it — as they did not understand its significance. Is it not sad to think of the little fellow afflicted 3 doubly in this way.

I was present at the Memorial services of Dr. Howe — and forwarded you a copy of the proceedings as I thought you might be interested in reading the speeches. I had quite a little talk with Laura Bridgman. She was very much affected by the services — and when the Cala Lilies were given to her by the Gov. of Mass., burst into tears. — The whole scene was one I shall long remember.

The immense Music Hall was crammed with people so that there was no standing-room. I hope you got my Registered Letter safely. I thought you would like to see the specification that has cost me so many sleepless nights — so I forwarded you my only copy. Please return it.

Mr. Hubbard is much pleased with it. He wrote home that the people in the Patent Office had said "Mr. Bell knew more about electricity than all the other inventors put together"!! So I have hopes there is something in it.

I really think I have struck the solution of a great problem. George Brown was much pleased too and said that he would go over the whole thing with Sir William Thompson. My

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specifications are now in the Patent Office but the Patents are not to be completed until we hear from George Brown that he has taken out foreign patents.

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There is a great deal of hard work before me — and now that I am well again I am ready to fall to with a vim !

(Sunday evening)

I had hoped to have written you all the news of myself & Mabel & of Telegr. &c., &c., &c.,- but I shall have to devote time to answer an important letter just received from the Patent Office — asking for fuller information concerning certain points in my first specification.

The letter quotes from my first specification — and then runs on “In order that the office may be enabled to clearly understand the relation existing between this application and other pending applications, applicant is requested to explain freely what is meant by the references to resonators being used etc. (4th to 7th lines p. 3) and to the “sound-board” (lines 3, 4, 5, page 8). An early answer is requested.”

I must write just now & shall require to sit up late too. Took May to her father's church to-day (The Congregational church) — and was duly “exhibited” to all her father's friends. I am so sorry to hear about Mary's ears. I shall try to see Dr. Blake tomorrow and ask him what is best to be done. I know certainly that in all cases of acrid discharge — the ear should be kept as clean as possible by gentle syringing with tepid water. I know that the principle 5 of safe syringing is to use a syringe the end of which is considerable smaller than the orifice of the ear — and to incline the head so that the water will run out of itself . The water should be sent in with only sufficient force to fill the cavity of the ear and the syringe held at the upper part of the ear filling up only a portion of the orifice. If (a) represents the orifice of the ear — then the little circle (b) will represent the orifice of the

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syringe and (c) the warm water &c. coming out of the ear. I shall forward any information I can obtain concerning the matter from Dr. Blake.

If you send the stones for Mabel's ring to me I shall have them set for you any way you think best.

Love to Uncle, Aunt and Cousins town & country and loads for yourself.

Your affectionate son Alec. P. S. How are baby Ballachey & Carrie? Did Jamie Cathcart make his appearance after all? Love to Carrie & George — and to George the third!! Or is he George V!! A. G. B. P. S. Thanks for the newspaper scraps you generally send. I find them very interesting & entertaining.

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The "Mouse" story has led to a determination on the part of the Hubbards Junior to shut their mouths when they see a mouse next time! Prof. A. M. Bell, Brantford, Ont., Canada.